5-2021

Pastoralism, Loss, and Nostalgia: Vaughan Williams's The Lark Ascending as an Elegy for Environmental Disruption

Kirsten Barker
Utah State University

PASTORALISM, LOSS, AND NOSTALGIA: VAUGHAN WILLIAMS'S *THE LARK ASCENDING* AS AN ELEGY FOR ENVIRONMENTAL DISRUPTION

by

Kirsten Barker

Capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation with

University Honors

with a major in
Music Performance

in the Department of Music

Approved:

Capstone Mentor Dr. Christopher M. Scheer	**Departmental Honors Advisor** Dr. Sara Bakker
Committee Member Rebecca McFaul	**University Honors Program Executive Director** Dr. Kristine Miller

UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY
Logan, UT

Spring 2021

Abstract

The idea that music embodies meaning is largely accepted and uncontroversial. However, the way in which this relationship is articulated is complicated and contributes to music's ability to project different meanings, especially according to time and place. Such is the case with the British composer Ralph Vaughan Williams's romance for violin and orchestra, *The Lark Ascending* (1920). This work contains both musical and extra musical traits that can be interpreted as pastoral and nostalgic. Understanding how these meanings interact through time provides the opportunity for reinterpretation of the work in the present through an environmentally-oriented framework. Previous research regarding *The Lark Ascending* has specifically focused on aspects such as the work in response to the First World War as well as potential symbolic relationships with George Meredith's eponymous 1881 poem. The present study establishes *The Lark Ascending* as a quintessential pastoral work by virtue of its musical content. By considering the circumstances of the work's creation as well as its subsequent reception, these pastoral traits are then reinterpreted as an expression of nostalgia. This understanding of the work's nostalgia underpins a new environmentally-oriented reading, one where a contemporary audience is asked to reflect on the emotional or existential distress caused by ecological loss and disruption, and the piece is heard as an elegy for environmental loss and impossible futures.

Acknowledgements

Though there are obviously many people who assisted me with this Honors Capstone, I would like to thank Dr. Christopher M. Scheer first and foremost. Throughout my time at USU, he provided indispensable feedback on innumerable drafts of my papers and projects, including applications to graduate programs. His mentorship and guidance has very much shaped the way I approach sources, writing, and ideas as they exist in the world as a whole.

I am also incredibly grateful to Rebecca McFaul—I don't know who or where I would be at the end of my undergraduate career without her incredible musicianship and tutelage. She never discouraged my absurd repertoire requests, which allowed me to first learn *The Lark* and then to return to it a few years later as part of this project.

Though they weren't directly involved in the creation and execution of my paper and lecture recital, I would also like to thank the rest of the Fry Street Quartet (Robert Waters, Bradley Ottesen, and Anne Francis Bayless), Dr. Rob Davies, and Dr. Sara Bakker for helping me find my voice.

My final set of acknowledgements goes to my friends and family, who probably heard more about this project than they would have liked—this includes the times when I refused to stop complaining about what I was reading and the times that I cornered people outside of practice rooms or inside of Zoom rooms (sorry, Kim and Laurana). And of course, I would be lost without the "assistance" of my Clover-cat, who leads a life of blissful ignorance and took great joy in getting in the way of my work.

Table of Contents

Introduction

On the BBC's *In Tune Highlights* podcast, British violinist Nicola Benedetti stated that Ralph Vaughan Williams's violin romance *The Lark Ascending* "is perhaps considered so particularly emotive because it depicts a vision of England that was on the brink of destruction."[1] Benedetti was referring specifically to the piece's relationship to the First World War and the idea that *The Lark* is evocative of pre-war England. This is just one interpretation that suggests the intersection between the pastoralism, loss, and nostalgia that has characterized much of the reception of *The Lark* over time. The connections between these three components create opportunities for varied interpretations of the piece beyond the one to which Benedetti refers. For example, as I will show, the pastoral and nostalgic attributes can be recontextualized, opening up possibilities for the music to represent and react against environmental loss in the present moment, perhaps creating a new understanding of an England (and planet) that is currently on the brink of destruction. In order to construct this new topical interpretation, I will first explore how *The Lark* and its eponymous poem exemplify the attributes of pastoralism. This will lay the groundwork for a consideration of how performance reception and analysis interpret both these traits and the piece's background. Building on the relationship between pastoralism and loss that is part of this discussion, *The Lark* will be explored through a nostalgic framework, providing a bridge to a new interpretation of the work that connects to reactions to environmental loss and ecological disruption. This will demonstrate that just as it can be understood as an exemplar of the pastoral and a nostalgic reaction to the aftermath of the First World War, *The Lark Ascending* can also serve as an elegy for everything already in the process of destruction and a reaction against further environmental disruption and the loss of possible futures due to climate change.

[1] Nicola Benedetti, "Ten Facts Ten Pieces: Vaughan Williams – The Lark Ascending," *In Tune Highlights*, podcast, October 14, 2015, https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p034sjh2.

The Lark Ascending

Vaughan Williams began composing *The Lark Ascending* in 1914, but his enlistment in the Royal Army Medical Corps at the outbreak of the First World War interrupted his work. He returned to *The Lark* in 1920 and revised the piece with the help of Marie Hall, the dedicatee.[2] She performed the piece accompanied by piano at an Avonmouth and Shirehampton Choral Society concert in mid-December of that year, with the orchestral premiere as part of a British Music Society concert in June of 1921. A review of the latter notes the piece's relationship to George Meredith's eponymous 1881 poem, and the program of the former includes the fragments from each of the poem's three stanzas that preface the score:

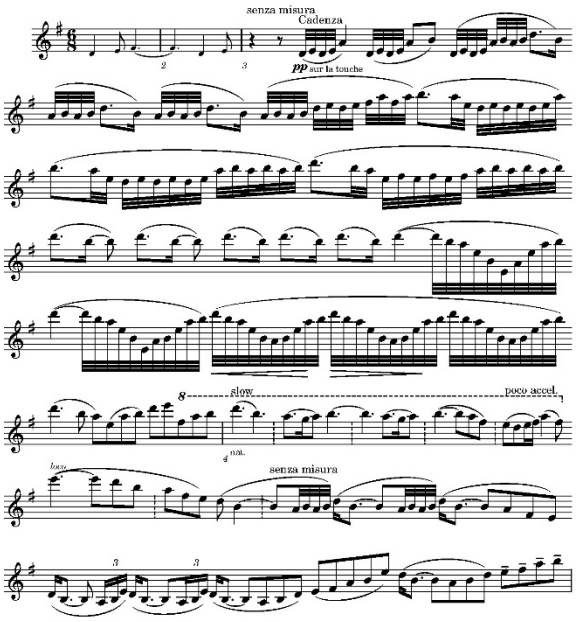
"He rises and begins to round,
He drops the silver chain of sound,
Of many links without a break,
In chirrup, whistle, slur and shake,
* * *
For singing till his heaven fills,
'Tis love of earth that he instils
And ever winging up and up,
Our valley is his golden cup,
And he the wine which overflows
To lift us with him as he goes;
* * *
Till, lost on his aërial rings
In light … and then the fancy sings."[3]

[2] Hall (1884–1956) studied with the likes of Edward Elgar and Otakar Ševčík before touring internationally beginning at age 19, which made her the foremost British violinist in the world at the time. She continued performing until the year before her death and made several recordings, including an abridged version of Elgar's violin concerto under the composer's own baton. See W. W. Cobbett and Noël Goodwin, "Hall, Marie," *Grove Music Online*, 2001, ed. Deane Root, https://doi-org.dist.lib.usu.edu/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.12232; Jean M. Haig-Whiteley, "Hall, Marie Pauline (1884–1956), violinist," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 23 Sept. 2004, https://doi.org.dist.lib.usu.edu/10.1093/ref:odnb/38575; Simon McVeigh, "'As the sand on the sea shore': Women Violinists in London's Concert Life around 1900," in *Essays on the History of English Music in Honour of John Caldwell: Sources, Style, Performance, Historiography*, ed. Emma Hornby and David Maw (Woolbridge, Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer: 2010), 232–258; Hugh Thomas, "To Marie Hall," *Ralph Vaughan Williams Society Journal* 54 (June 2012): 14–15.

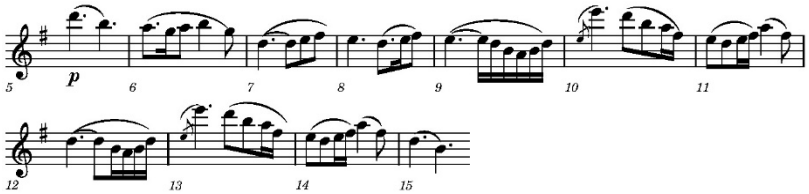
[3] Anon., "British Music Society – An 'Unknown' Programme," *The Times*, June 15, 1921, https://link-gale-com.dist.lib.usu.edu/apps/doc/CS134942927/TTDA?u=utahstate&sid=TTDA&xid=f466a861; Anon., "The Lark Ascending Premiere," Bristol Ensemble, https://www.bristolensemble.com/the-lark-ascending-premiere; George Meredith, "The Lark Ascending," *The Fortnightly Review* 35 (1881): 588–591, https://hdl.handle.net/2027/coo.31924077571200; Ralph Vaughan Williams, *The Lark Ascending* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1925), www.bl.uk/collection-items/vaughan-williams-the-lark-ascending.

Though the poem has a bipartite structure, the overall form of the violin piece is a ternary ABA', which allows the thematic material to return in an arch-like structure. The piece opens with a cadenza followed by Theme 1, another cadenza, Theme 2, and Theme 3, at which point the thematic occurrences reverse—Theme 2 returns followed by Theme 1 and the closing cadenza. The opening cadenza and initial occurrences of each of the themes are included below in order to provide a baseline reference for discussing how pastoral and nostalgic components relate to each other and fit within *The Lark's* larger structure, which can be seen below in Figure 1. Figure 1 also provides a visualization of how the themes and cadenzas reoccur within the form. Because thematic returns are a component of nostalgic interpretations of the piece, understanding the overall structure of the relationships between the presence and absence of thematic components is useful.

Opening Cadenza



Theme 1



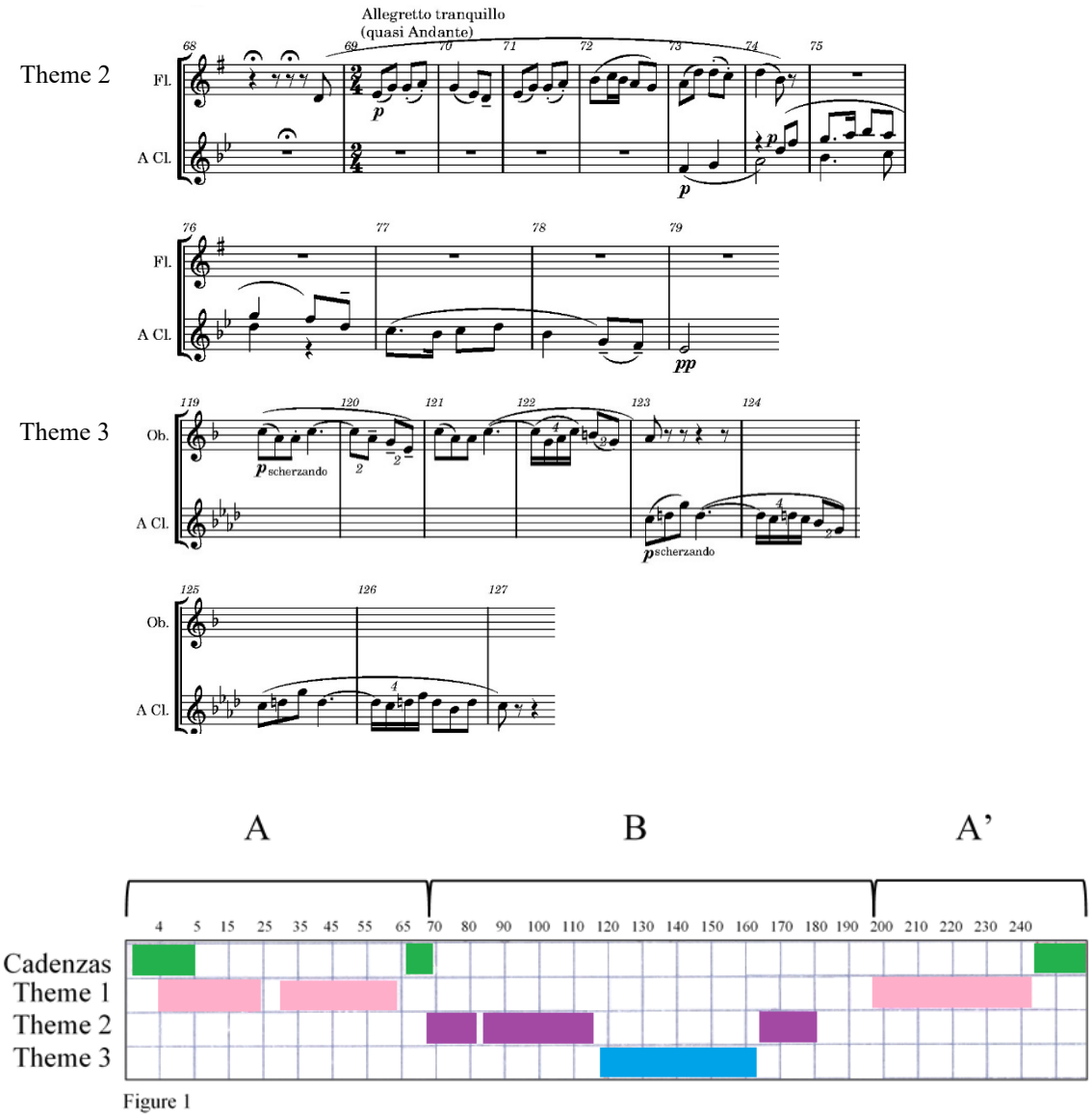


Figure 1

Pastoralism as it Relates to Vaughan Williams and Meredith

According to literary scholar Paul Alpers, pastoralism, which is a thematic element of both Vaughan Williams's piece and Meredith's poem, is often equated with idyllic portrayals of rural environments.[4] Vaughan Williams's *Lark* demonstrates pastoral characteristics through its melodic content, harmonic structure, and performance reception. In *English Pastoral Music:*

[4] Paul Alpers, *What Is Pastoral?* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 16–22.

From Arcadia to Utopia, 1900–1955, Eric Saylor defines musical pastoralism as typically including many of the following attributes:

- Prolonged passages of harmonic stasis, often achieved by the use of pedal points, drone fifths, sustained chords, or gently oscillating accompanimental patterns.
- Generally triadic harmonies that retain pitch centricity without necessarily adhering to conventional means of securing or reinforcing tonality. For example, chordal parallelism, parallel fifths, and unusual dissonance resolutions are frequently present.
- The use of modal scales, pentatonicism, and/or pandiatonicism, sometimes in ways that obscure the identity of the scale (e.g., employing a pitch collection of G–A–B-flat–C–D–F to imply either G minor or G Dorian).
- Extended passages of parallel thirds, particularly in the upper voices.
- Cross relations are common, though extended passages of chromaticism are usually avoided. Diatonic and consonant harmonies prevail.
- Avoidance of systematic motivic development in favor of motivic or thematic fragmentation, repetition, and recombination.
- Rhapsodic melodies, often featuring irregular, unpredictable, and/or rhythmically free phrase structures, frequently starting low in the range and gradually rising. These are often accompanied by sustained harmonic sonorities.
- Use of compound meters and/or gently flowing rhythms, usually at slow to moderate tempos. More active passages either evoking the qualities of English folk dance or employing elaborate, cadenza-like solo embellishments or rhapsodic flourishes may occur.
- Predominantly quiet dynamic levels and light, transparent textures.
- A proclivity for string-dominated timbres, with secondary emphasis on the upper woodwinds. Double reeds, violins, violas, and clarinets are often favored as soloists within an orchestral context.
- Texts, titles, or programs that evoke natural landscapes (particularly specific sites within England), classical imagery, elegiac sentiments, and/or introspective (possibly religious) contemplation.[5]

Understanding how these traits relate to *The Lark's* thematic material is necessary for demonstrating how the piece exemplifies and embodies musical pastoralism and supports interpretations related to that. Passages of harmonic stasis occur throughout the piece and are most evident in the cadenzas, where the orchestra holds one of its opening chords while the violin plays a series of trills and arpeggios (measures 3–4, 66–67, 246–247). Triadic harmonies are present in the form of passages of octaves leading into alternating fifths, thirds, and sixths at the end of each section (m. 40–49, 181–196, 219–223). Modal scales and pentatonicism are present throughout the piece—for example, measures 1–3 and their subsequent repetitions

[5] Eric Saylor, *English Pastoral Music: From Arcadia to Utopia, 1900–1955* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2017), 24, https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.dist.lib.usu.edu/lib/usu/detail.action?docID=4866466.

demonstrate E Dorian.[6] Parallel thirds are also present throughout, but are mostly confined to the passages of tremolo-trills and Theme 1's final return (m. 234–240), and diatonicism and consonance are also prominent throughout the piece. Thematic fragmentation is prevalent at the ends of sections, where the small segments of melody pass between overlapping voices. Measures 50–64 clearly demonstrate this fragmentation through the overlap of several melodic ideas with fragments derived from m. 20–23, the second *senza misura* of the cadenza, and Theme 1. *The Lark* has several rhapsodic melodies that all contain some level of rhythmic freedom with sustained accompaniment throughout. The piece's prevailing meter is compound, and the rhythms in the slow A and A' sections could be considered "flowing," which is something that Theme 1 clearly demonstrates. The B section is reminiscent of folk song or dance due to the lively squareness and triplets of Themes 2 and 3. With a few notable exceptions such as Theme 1's return in A', the dynamics of the piece are within the piano range, and the overall musical textures are very light and transparent, and the piece's timbre is string- and wind-dominated. *The Lark Ascending's* title can be evocative of all the ideas in the final bullet point of Saylor's list, which contributes to the piece's embodiment of the pastoral style.

As Meredith's "Lark" clearly inspired Vaughan Williams's, the former's pastoralism can be understood to contribute to that of the latter. In Romantic poetry such as that of Meredith, idyllic depictions of nature and landscapes are prevalent, and the writing is characterized by simplicity, sentimentality, nostalgia, and/or elegiac qualities.[7] Meredith's poetry is said to "call up all the delicate country sensations," and to convey "the spirit lurking beneath and expressed in

[6] Further occurrences of modality are discussed in detail by scholars such as Christopher Mark and David Manning. See Christopher Mark, "Chamber music and works for soloist with orchestra," in *The Cambridge Companion to Vaughan Williams*, ed. Alain Frogley and Aiden J. Thomson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 185–187; David Manning, "Harmony, Tonality and Structure in Vaughan Williams's Music." (PhD diss., University of Wales, 2003), 57–71.

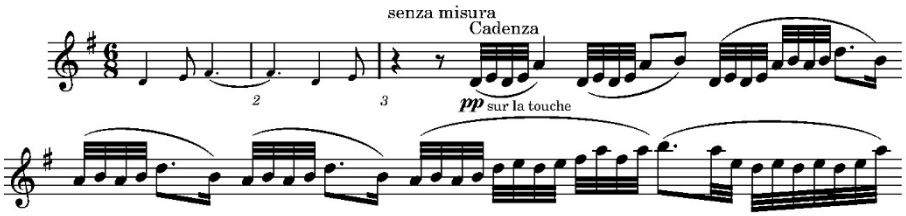
[7] Alpers, *What Is Pastoral?*, 27–37.

[nature's] outward appearance," which correlates with the qualities that Alpers ascribes to pastoralism.[8] In "The Lark," the pastoral is present through imagery and metaphors. Meredith's descriptive writing evokes the essence of nature and the world's relationship to the lark in a way that goes beyond the title, and the bird's song, flight, and relationship to natural landscapes are clear for the reader, as are the unity of the people and earth. According to John Holmes, the poem "…urges us to accept Nature on its own terms and to realize that we ourselves are part of the natural world."[9] These pastoral depictions contribute to an idyllicism within "The Lark" by emphasizing rural beauty and simplicity, which can be seen in *The Lark* through its inclusion of poem fragments.

The relationship between the music and the poem increases *The Lark's* ability to support multiple interpretations by emphasizing the ambiguity of pastoralism and its ability to evoke the nostalgic or elegiac through the use of and connection to text. These symbolic intersections between the piece and the poem demonstrate a plausible relationship the two might have beyond the fragments with which Vaughan Williams chose to preface the score, and specific examples of this connection are present in each of *The Lark's* sections. For example, the first stanza of "The Lark" describes the beauty of the bird's song and flight, which can be seen in the line "a press of hurried notes that run." This imagery can be likened to the opening cadenza's fluttering trills and arpeggios (hereafter referred to as bird-music, an example of which can be seen in an excerpt of m. 3 below) that lead into the soaring Theme 1, where these trill figures are present in at least

[8] George Macaulay Trevelyan, *The Poetry and Philosophy of George Meredith* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906), 44; Martin Armstrong, "The Poetry of George Meredith," *The North American Review* 213, no. 748 (March 1921): 358, www.jstor.com/stable/25120703.

[9] John Holmes, "Darwinism, Feminism, and the Sonnet Sequence: Meredith's 'Modern Love,'" *Victorian Poetry* 48, no. 4 (Winter 2010): 530.



one of the voices throughout the A section (m. 1–68). The poem's second stanza blends the imagery of the bird with that of dance and unity, which can be heard through the alternating, near-constant presence of the bird-music and one of the folk-like themes of the B section (m. 69–196). The poem's third stanza focuses on the people who "sing not, sweet" and are unified with the rest of the world despite not hearing the bird's song "Because their love of Earth is deep." The poem implies that though the bird remains unheard, he continues to sing as "he to silence nearer soars," expanding the unification of the pastoral people and earth before becoming "lost on his aërial rings." In *The Lark*, the absence of the bird-music and the focus on a fully orchestrated return to Theme 1 in section A' (m. 197–247) reflects the idea that the bird is unheard by the people. As in the poem, the trills and arpeggios of the bird-music return as the main focus in the closing cadenza before ascending to the violin's upper register and dissipating into silence. Each of these connections emphasize the relationship between the piece and poem.

***The Lark Ascending*, Pastoralism, Loss, and Nostalgia**

Throughout the century since *The Lark's* composition, its performance reception demonstrates many of the ways in which audiences understand the music's pastoral elements, particularly in relation to stereotypical idyllicism. At the piece's premiere, reviewers described music that "dreams its way along," "is that of the clean countryside," and has a "serene and remote sense of contemplation."[10] This pastoral atmosphere was also heard in later

[10] Anon., "British Music Society – An 'Unknown' Programme," *The Times*, June 15, 1921, https://link-gale-com.dist.lib.usu.edu/apps/doc/CS134942927/TTDA?u=utahstate&sid=TTDA&xid=f466a861; Edward J. Dent,

performances, where reviewers describe the piece as "rapturous and unearthly" and emphasize the "meditative introspection" of the sound.[11] These descriptions relate to the idea that pastoral settings can provide transcendent connection to the natural world, which can be seen in Holmes' reaction to Meredith's poem. *The Lark's* evocations of pastoral imagery, specifically the rural and rustic connotations, can be seen in reviews that note that the music is like "the shimmer of spring sunlight," and performances "[conjure] up visions of open fields and sky and the heavenly songster soaring into the blue," "capture the true spirit of that small bird, pouring its heart out above the open countryside," and "always makes one think of a Westcountry landscape."[12] These examples clearly demonstrate some of the ways in which listeners consistently hear *The Lark's* pastoralism as evoking both introspective experiences and rural imagery.

However, as the quote that opens this paper suggests, *The Lark Ascending* and its pastoral qualities are not always heard as symbolic or as evocative of reassuring, bucolic landscapes. Though the idyllic evocations presented in the previous paragraph are prevalent across time, other reviewers describe the music as "cast over with a certain melancholy" and as having "a

---

"The World of Music," *Illustrated London News*, June 25, 1921, https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/HN3100245614/ILN?u=utahstate&sid=ILN&xid=702e72c4.

[11] Anon., "London Concerts," *The Musical Times* 68, no. 1010 (April 1, 1927): 355, https://www.jstor.org/stable/912810; Alfred Kalisch, "London Concerts," *The Musical Times* 62, no. 941 (July 1, 1921): 490, https://www.jstor.org/stable/908238. See also Anon., "B.B.C. Orchestra's Visit," *Bath Weekly Chronicle and Herald*, Jan. 27, 1940, https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000515/19400127/064/0008; Anon., "Music in the city," *Runcorn Weekly News*, June 12, 1969, https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0003296/19690612/182/0011.

[12] Anon., "Leith Hill Festival," *The Times*, April 14, 1926, https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CS235608718/TTDA?u=utahstate&sid=TTDA&xid=55403936; Anon., "One Hour of Music," *Bucks Herald*, July 26, 1940, https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000270/19400726/123/0006; Norah Lewis, "Guests are right on song," *Sandwell Evening Mail*, July 10, 1986, https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0002487/19860710/243/0029; Anon., "Our London Letter," *Western Morning News*, Dec. 16, 1936, https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000329/19361216/072/0008. See also Anon., "Brilliant Concert in the Shire Hall," *Gloucester Journal*, Sept. 8, 1928, https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000532/19280908/111/0015; M. M. E., "A Wealth of Music," *Western Mail & South Wales News*, September 11, 1931, https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000104/19310911/236/0010; Anon., "A piano concerto lacking greatness," *Belfast Telegraph*, Oct. 12, 1963, https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0002318/19631012/028/0002; David Ross, "English flavor in Halle' treat," *Cheshire Observer*, August 8, 1975, https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000157/19750808/541/0034.

sweet sadness."[13] These interpretations underline the idea that in addition to representing landscape and/or nature, pastoralism can evoke the elegiac. Saylor demonstrates this aspect of pastoralism in Vaughan Williams's *Pastoral Symphony*, where musical elements can "evoke the unsettling stillness war leaves in its wake."[14] In *The Lark*, this same biographical context supports similar elegiac interpretations. Though the composer served as a heavy artillery officer and music director, his wartime experience also directly exposed him to the horrific consequences of trench warfare as a stretcher-bearer, ambulance driver, and hospital orderly. The deaths of several of his younger friends in the first two years of the war, including the composer George Butterworth, also greatly affected Vaughan Williams—in a letter to Gustav Holst, Vaughan Williams expresses "dread" at the prospect of returning to England and facing the "gaps" left by those who died.[15] As Saylor demonstrates with the *Pastoral Symphony*, where he suggests that "Vaughan Williams must have hoped that, for certain listeners, it would evoke the unsettling stillness war leaves in its wake—the barren fields, the silent dead, and the emotional gaps in the lives of survivors," these losses and experiences arguably had an impact on Vaughan Williams's post-war music, including *The Lark Ascending*.[16] This is noted by Michael Kennedy, who states that Vaughan Williams's post-war compositions, specifically *The Shepherds of the Delectable Mountains*, the *Pastoral Symphony*, and *The Lark*, were "some of his quietest, most meditative music." Kennedy suggests that Vaughan Williams used these pieces to respond to the war by "look[ing] into the recesses of the human spirit," a reaction that is a more melancholy and

---

[13] Anon., "Mr. Guy Warrack's Concert," *The Times*, December 9, 1926, https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CS236657545/TTDA?u=utahstate&sid=TTDA&xid=a65821dc; K. W. Dommett, "Orchestra da Camera concert," *Birmingham Post*, March 8, 1965, https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0002135/19650308/176/0005.

[14] Saylor, *English Pastoral Music*, 87.

[15] Ursula Vaughan Williams, *R. V. W.: A Biography of Ralph Vaughan Williams* (New York: Clarendon Press, 2002), 115–132; Ralph Vaughan Williams to Gustav Holst, October 21, 1916, "VWL426," The Letters of Ralph Vaughan Williams, http://vaughanwilliams.uk/letter/vwl426.

[16] Saylor, *English Pastoral Music*, 87.

contemplative than distressed or angry.[17] Similarly, Christopher Mark argues that the manner of thematic return within *The Lark* contributes to "a powerful sense of loss."[18] As these writers demonstrate, the pastoral sound of *The Lark* can be interpreted as an evocation of mourning and longing for a past that has been destroyed and a future that is no longer possible. This kind of longing enables the piece to exemplify nostalgia, which is broadly characterized by a yearning for a moment that is not available in the present.[19]

As these interpretations of Vaughan Williams's post-war compositions demonstrate, musical pastoralism can imply loss and in turn create a nostalgic response in the listener. In *The Lark Ascending*, this is connected to the utilization of thematic returns in a way that intensifies feelings of loss and nostalgia through the awareness of differences. This is particularly noticeable in m. 169–248 due to the way in which the returns of the bird-music and Theme 2 subvert listener expectations through the end of the piece.

In his analysis of the piece, Mark demonstrates how the preparation for the return of Theme 2 at m. 169 is recontextualized by the disruption of melody and pulse from m. 163–168.

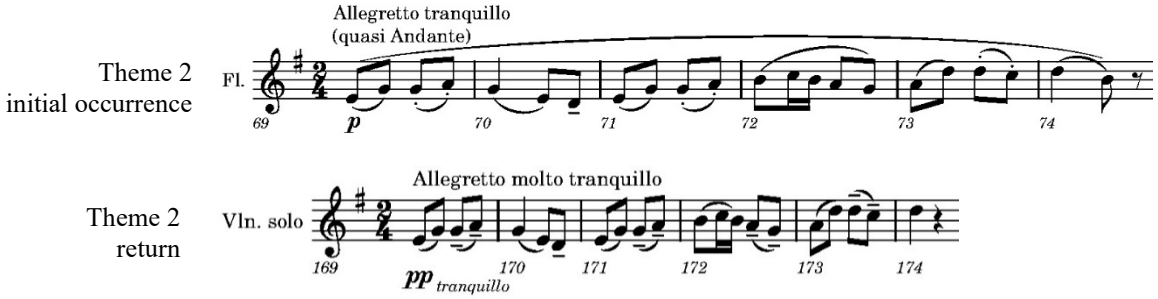
---

[17] Michael Kennedy, *Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), 150–155.

[18] Mark, "Chamber music," 185–187.

[19] Within nostalgia studies, there is a consensus that nostalgia is paradoxical and unfixed, containing many variations and categorizations that overlap and blend together and can be classified based on source or application. These variations relate to how one approaches the nostalgic experience and includes descriptions such as individual and collective; simple, reflexive, and interpretive; endo- and exo-; and reflective and restorative. Because of its unfixedness and ability to "increase empathy, charitable intentions, and charitable behavior," nostalgia is utilized by various disciplines and industries in ways that serve personal, commercial, and political interests, including connection to the identity of self and community, commodification of aspects of an idealized past, and social initiatives and public policy. See Michael Hviid Jacobsen ed., "Introduction," in *Nostalgia Now: Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives on the Past in the Present* (London: Routledge, 2020), 10–13, https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.dist.lib.usu.edu/lib/usu/detail.action?docID=6121570; Fred Davis, *Yearning for Yesterday: A sociology of Nostalgia* (New York: The Free Press, 1979); David Berliner, *Losing Culture: Nostalgia, Heritage, and Our Accelerated Times*, trans. Dominic Horsfall (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2020), 62; Renato Rosaldo, "Imperialist Nostalgia," *Representations* 26, Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory (Spring 1989): 107–108, doi: 10.2307/2928525; Clay Routledge, *Nostalgia: A Psychological Resource* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 63–65, https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.dist.lib.usu.edu/lib/usu/detail.action?docID=4014625; Janelle L. Wilson, "Future imaginings: Nostalgia for unrealized possible selves," in *Nostalgia Now: Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives on the Past in the Present*, ed. Michael Hviid Jacobsen (London: Routledge, 2020), 75–76, https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.dist.lib.usu.edu/lib/usu/detail.action?docID=6121570.

There, the solo violin repeats its lowest five notes in a slowing pulse that turns into a *senza misura*, which creates a feeling of suspended time.[20] The peculiarity of this passage in relation to the rest of the piece draws attention to the return of Theme 2, which was initially introduced in m. 69 as a folkish flute solo. At m. 169, this theme is slightly slower and re-orchestrated for violin, and the last beat of each measure includes tenuto markings that emphasize a more contemplative character. The differences between these two versions of the theme can be seen below. The rhetorical effect of this return is nostalgia for the lively version from m. 69. At the



same time, the listener is reminded that because the past cannot be had again, all that remains in the present moment are memories of what is now absent. Matthew Riley puts it another way, arguing that these kinds of returns evoke nostalgia by creating a reminiscent atmosphere and reminding the listener of what the theme was and how perception of the theme has changed due to the nature of its return.[21]

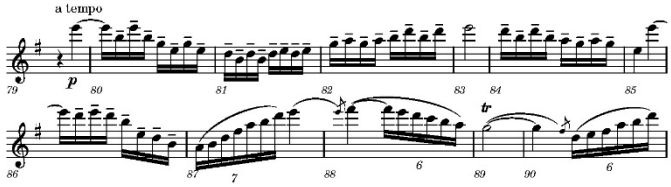
Just as the recontextualization of Theme 2 at m. 169 adds to the nostalgic atmosphere that surrounds it, so too does the return and alteration of the bird-music beginning at m. 181. In m. 181–196, it subverts the listener's expectations for what should follow Theme 2. After Theme 2's initial occurrence in m. 69–79, the solo violin enters with a sixteenth note passage that circles

[20] Mark, "Chamber music," 185–187.

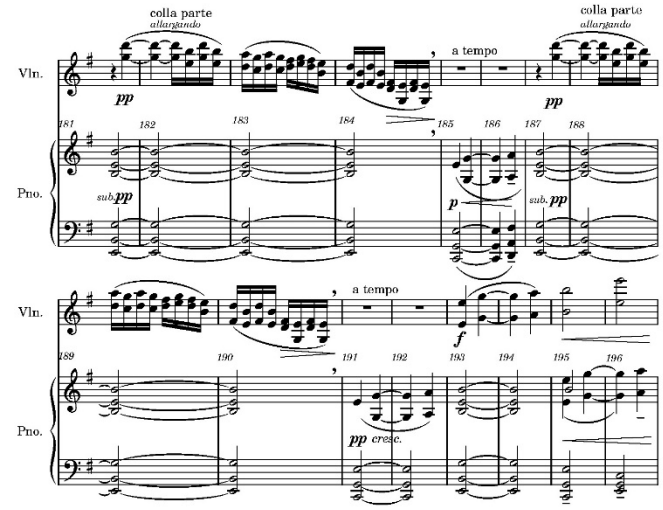
[21] Riley discusses this in relation to Edward Elgar's *Concerto in B minor for Violin and Orchestra, op. 61*, where he demonstrates how thematic reiteration evokes nostalgia in the concerto's third movement. In the Elgar concerto, Riley suggests that this nostalgia is possible due to the preceding material and new orchestration. See Matthew Riley, *Edward Elgar and the Nostalgic Imagination* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: 2007), 1–19.

around E and G and serves as ornamentation for the theme. Something similar happens following Theme 2's return at m. 169. However, though the harmonies here are similar to what they were at m. 79 in regard to tonality and the musical line, the atmosphere and character are more subdued due to the decreased tempo, the orchestra's held E minor chords, and the use of allargando and breath marks. As can be seen below, the contour of the solo violin line both

Theme 2 initial bird-music



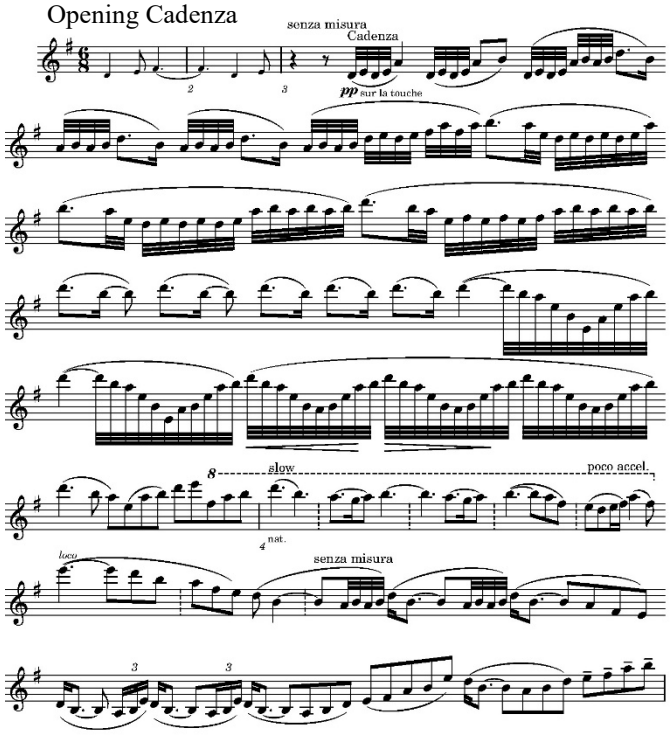
Theme 2 final bird-music



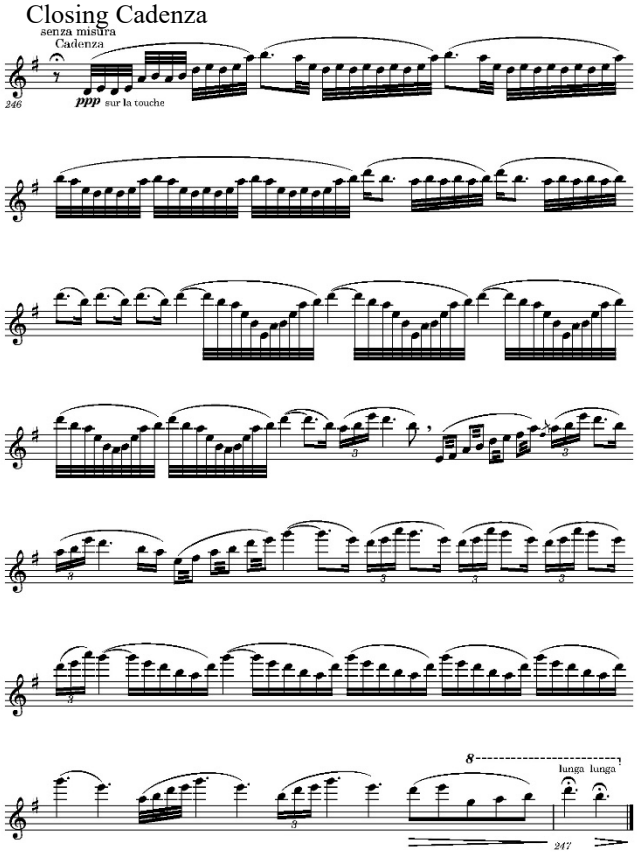
descends and ascends at m. 79, while at m. 181 it only ever leads downward. Though the orchestra part (seen above as a piano reduction for visual clarity) leads back up to the violin's fifths, this instills a sense of weight and inertia in the listener, particularly as the pulse has a suspended quality. This passage leads into the A' section at m. 197, where the complete absence of the bird-music is noticeable. Because the trills and arpeggios are a near-constant presence in *The Lark* in earlier sections, this sets up the expectation that they will continue to ornament Theme 1 throughout A'. Hearing this gap where the bird-music should be can generate intense nostalgia because just as with Theme 2, the listener realizes that something is missing or changed, and the way they experienced that something in the past is cut off in the present. When

the bird-music finally does arrive in the final three bars of the piece, it is defies expectation, and rather than simply reprising the previous versions of the cadenza, the closing cadenza is more nostalgic because, like the return of Theme 2 and the altered bird-music in m. 181–196, the music of the cadenza is a memory or ghost that reminds the listener of the past versions. By becoming simultaneously more elaborate and more directionless (see first and final cadenzas below), the return of the trills and arpeggios and their subsequent disappearance into silence can remind the listener of the past that is inaccessible in the present.

Opening Cadenza



Closing Cadenza



These thematic alterations demonstrate how the form and pastoral elements of the piece can be read in terms of loss and nostalgia. Additionally, because a nostalgic interpretation of the piece is an enduring element of *The Lark's* reception history and is clearly supported by the

music, this introduces the possibility of a reinterpretation of the nostalgia towards concerns of the present.

The Lark Ascending as an Environmentally Nostalgic Work

The Lark Ascending's pastoral and nostalgic traits can be reframed in relation to modern experiences of environmental loss through the climate change that threatens the present and future—though the extent of this experience is and will in no way be universal due to inequality, injustice, and geographic differences, climate change will still affect everyone across the globe.[22] Andrew Mark suggests that the arts can create a space that allows people to process these "otherwise unspeakable, un-identifiable, un-acknowledgeable, and un-grievable loss[es]."[23] This space is particularly relevant to environmental nostalgia because the potential losses are vast, spanning across ecosystems and encompassing entire geographic regions. Within this space, one can follow the ideas of Ashlee Cunsolo Willox, Alastair Bonnett, and others, and experience environmental mourning, which can lead to action motivated by greater willingness to act on behalf of the environment.[24] Because environmental losses create gaps in the future and lead to a

---

[22] Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), *Summary for policymakers of the global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services* (Bonn, Germany: IPBES, 2019), https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3553579.

[23] Andrew Mark, "Don't Organize, Mourn: Environmental Loss and Musicking," *Ethics and the Environment* 21, no. 2 (Fall 2016): 53, doi:10.2979/ethicsenviro.21.2.03.

[24] Cunsolo Willox argues that by mourning losses across time, we can use shared grief to create communities and expand climate-related discourse and action. Ashlee Cunsolo Willox, "Climate Change as the Work of Mourning," *Ethics & the Environment* 17, no. 2, Special Issue on Climate Change (Fall 2012): 137–164. Similarly, Joanna Macy suggests that acknowledging of environmental mourning and its cause is essential for moving from despair to action and change. Joanna Macy, "Working Through Environmental Despair," in *Ecopsychology: Restoring the Earth, Healing the Mind*, ed. Theodore Roszak, Mary E. Gomes, and Allen D. Kanner (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1995), 240–252. Bonnett contends that nostalgic responses to environmental crises "[seek] to take us back in order to take us forward" by challenging societal structures and anthropocentrism, and he suggests that this approach is "a process of rediscovery and, inevitably, romanticization, of nature-human relationships from other times and places," (Alastair Bonnett, *Left in the Past: Radicalism and the Politics of Nostalgia* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic & Professional, 2010), 172–173, https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.dist.lib.usu.edu/lib/usu/detail.action?docID=592427.), which allows us to acknowledge hope and create what Sarah Jaquette Ray calls "optimistic caring." Sarah Jaquette Ray, "Coming of Age at the End of the World," in *Affective Ecocriticism: Emotion, Embodiment, Environment*, ed. Kyle Bladow and Jennifer Ladino (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2018), 299–313, https://ebookcentral-proquest-

disruption of pastoral landscapes that listeners might regard as idyllic, environmental approaches to nostalgia are relevant to *The Lark Ascending*.[25] Just as many people hear *The Lark* through pastoral nostalgia, the piece can also function as a vehicle for an ecologically-oriented nostalgia as a response to a disrupted environment. Three nostalgic approaches that are useful for understanding how *The Lark's* traits can relate to ecological disruption are reflective, solastalgic, and imperialist, each of which offers a different perspective of longing for an unchanged environment.

Using the concept of reflective nostalgia developed by Svetlana Boym, one can hear in *The Lark* a longing for the lost idyllicism associated with the landscapes and nature that have been and will be permanently altered. The English countryside associated with the piece is already undergoing significant change through increased temperatures, flooding, drought, and loss of native species, each of which is projected to worsen.[26] The compositional elements of the work, particularly the nostalgic atmosphere surrounding the thematic returns in the latter half of the piece, further emphasize remembrance and mourning rather than reconstructing or restoring the object of longing. This can be read in relation to environmental loss, where even if all

---

com.dist.lib.usu.edu/lib/usu/detail.action?docID=5520528. Studies analyzed by Clay Routledge support each of these ideas and suggest that "nostalgia increases empathy, charitable intentions, and charitable behavior." Clay Routledge, *Nostalgia: A Psychological Resource* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 63–65 https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.dist.lib.usu.edu/lib/usu/detail.action?docID=6121570.

[25] Though the problematic aspects of nostalgia's romanticization of the past are not considered in the present study, they are discussed in detail by numerous scholars. In addition to the sources referenced in this paper, see David Berry, *On Nostalgia* (Toronto: Couch House Books, 2020); Kyle Bladow and Jennifer Ladino, eds, *Affective Ecocriticism: Emotion, Embodiment, Environment* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2018); Tammy Clewell, ed., *Modernism and Nostalgia: Bodies, Locations, Aesthetics* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Christopher Lasch, "The Politics of Nostalgia: Losing history in the mists of ideology," *Harper's* 269 (1984): 65–70; David Lowenthal, "Nostalgia Tells it Like it Wasn't," in *The Imagined Past: History and Nostalgia*, edited by Christopher Shaw and Malcolm Chase (New York: Manchester University Press, 1989), 18–32; Michael Hviid Jacobsen, ed., *Nostalgia Now: Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives on the Past in the Present* (London: Routledge, 2020); Stuart Tannock, "Nostalgia Critique," *Cultural Studies* 9, no. 3 (1995): 153–164.

[26] Committee on Climate Change, *UK Climate Change Risk Assessment 2017* (London: 2017), https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-climate-change-risk-assessment-2017; Adaptation Sub-Committee of the Committee on Climate Change (ASC), *UK Climate Change Risk Assessment 2017 Evidence Report – Summary for England* (London: 2016), https://www.theccc.org.uk/what-is-climate-change/preparing-for-climate-change/uk-climate-change-risk-assessment-2017/national-summaries/england/.

degradation stops, it will be impossible to return to what once was or to bridge the ecological gaps exacerbated by the feedback loops of climate change. Even if a habitat could be completely restored, it is never the same and will never be whole again because of the extent of the ongoing disruption. In relation to *The Lark*, once we hear the music and themes, it is impossible to return to the time before we knew the piece.

This reflective approach to loss relates to the components of solastalgia, which is an offshoot of nostalgia which focuses on mourning as a reaction to environmental disruption and is specifically defined as a longing for a continuance of the solace once provided by home. Unlike reflective nostalgia, solastalgia focuses solely on the loss of the present and not the past or future.[27] Through the desire to retain the idyllic, this longing for the continued existence of the landscape and nature of "home" directly relates to the pastoral's representation of stability, even though listeners likely have not experienced a bucolic pastoral themselves.[28] The listener might then consider the loss of their own environments and others by relating these losses back to their actual home and extending the solastalgia outward to other places and ecosystems that they may not typically view as worthy of consideration when compared to the pastoral idyllic. Within *The Lark*, the recontextualization of thematic materials leads the listener to desire the continuance of trills and arpeggios and for the thematic returns to be what they once were. But this is

[27] Glenn Albrecht, who coined the term, argues that though solastalgia is specifically felt due to "the ongoing impact of the changed environment on those who remained in the area affected," solastalgia extends to those not directly experiencing that impact because "direct experience" and "home" are blurred due to the increasingly global nature of our media consumption. See Glenn Albrecht, "'Solastalgia': A New Concept in Health and Identity," *PAN: Philosophy Activism Nature* no. 3 (2005): 41–55. See also: Glenn Albrecht, *Earth Emotions: New Words for a New World* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019), 29–61, https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.dist.lib.usu.edu/lib/usu/detail.action?docID=5742760; Glenn Albrecht, "Solastalgia and the New Mourning," in *Mourning Nature: Hope at the Heart of Ecological Loss and Grief*, ed. Ashlee Cunsolo and Karen Landman (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2017), 292–315, doi: 10.2307/j.ctt1w6t9hg.17.

[28] Brian S. Turner, "A Note on Nostalgia," *Theory, Culture, and Society* 4, no. 1 (1987): 147–156.

impossible, and when the themes return, their alterations only remind us that what we knew will only exists as a memory.

Because these reflective and solastalgic approaches to environmental loss are connected to what we ourselves have disrupted, they also relate to an imperialist nostalgia, which is derived from colonialism and is oriented toward objects that have been altered or destroyed by those experiencing nostalgic longing. Longing for pastoralism's lost idyllicism becomes focused on the nature and landscape that the listeners and performers helped destroy, whether purposely or not, simply by virtue of being part of a society that is rooted in the consumption of fossil fuels. The interpretation of the piece as "a vision of an England […] on the brink of destruction" can also be seen through this lens because this evocation is an interpretation of a response to the aftermath of the First World War, an anthropogenic event that caused and contributed to ecological disruption, just as climate change is currently doing. This kind of nostalgia is particularly relevant because the people, groups, and systems whose actions are primarily driving climate change are not those who currently (and will continue to) bear the brunt of its effects, and this disparity intensifies the imperialist nature of the nostalgia that *The Lark* evokes for listeners.

As applied to the musical rhetoric of *The Lark Ascending*, these nostalgias can be interpreted in a way that invites listeners to contemplate and mourn past, present, and future environmental losses through the piece's nostalgic attributes as they relate to the pastoral. Highlighting certain aspects of the piece, specifically the absence and altered return of the bird-music, might heighten this feeling for audiences. In the closing cadenza (m. 246–248), emphasis of the ethereal qualities of the sul tasto sound of the violin imparts a more haunting timbre to the return and nostalgic expansion of the trills and arpeggios, particularly when they dissipate into silence at the close of the piece. Beyond the final cadenza, the melancholy nature of the piece's

nostalgic traits and of nostalgia itself allows *The Lark* to serve as an elegy for possible futures that have been and will be lost due to climate change and for the people, places, and creatures that have been and will be irreversibly altered because of those losses.

Conclusion

As demonstrated in this paper, *The Lark Ascending* is clearly an archetype of pastoralism, though the meaning of that pastoralism is ambivalent. One interpretation that is supported by historical context is that of nostalgia in relation to loss, where the elegiac qualities of both pastoralism and nostalgia can be understood as mourning the impossibility of return. The piece's "vision of England […] on the brink of destruction" can apply to a more modern interpretation of the piece, because just as Vaughan Williams's England was on the precipice of the First World War when he began *The Lark*, England and the planet currently stand at a more daunting precipice. Without significant action, both will be largely unrecognizable by the end of the century due to anthropogenic climate change that is already disrupting current ecosystems.[29] In the same "Ten Facts Ten Pieces" program from which the paper's opening quote is drawn, Benedetti also suggests that "[Vaughan Williams's] visions of nature are often shot through with a bittersweet element suggestive of humankind's separation from it," which is particularly relevant in a world that is losing more and more of its biodiversity and biomass. An environmental nostalgia allows us to engage with these losses by reflecting on what has been and will be disrupted, what is presently affected, and how even with the best intentions, we ourselves contribute to all levels of environmental degradation and disruption. While *The Lark's* elegiac qualities and capacity for ecologically-oriented nostalgia and mourning can simply focus on

[29] For specific sources and projections regarding best- and worst-case scenarios for how ecosystems and societies globally have been and will be affected by various aspects and externalities of climate change, see David Wallace-Wells, *The Uninhabitable Earth: Life After Warming* (New York: Tim Duggan Books, 2019).

longing for the absent and soon-to-be absent, the piece's nostalgia can also contribute to environmental action by encouraging listeners to acknowledge the cause of mourning. This approach allows the nostalgia of *The Lark Ascending* to serve as a springboard for addressing ecological disruption and for potentially reimagining and challenging current systems through the pastoral's romanticization of nature and the past in a way that Bonnett argues leads us to "turn away [from post-modernism] and back to things that remain worth fighting for and which sustain."[30] By doing so, our actions will enable more of the planet to step back from the processes that are driving toward ecological tipping points that place us on the brink of destruction.

[30] Bonnett, *Left in the Past*, 172–173.

Bibliography

Adaptation Sub-Committee of the Committee on Climate Change (ASC). *UK Climate Change Risk Assessment 2017 Evidence Report – Summary for England*. London: 2016. https://www.theccc.org.uk/what-is-climate-change/preparing-for-climate-change/uk-climate-change-risk-assessment-2017/national-summaries/england/.

Albrecht, Glenn. *Earth Emotions: New Words for a New World*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019. https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.dist.lib.usu.edu/lib/usu/detail.action?docID=5742760.

——— "Solastalgia." *Alternatives Journal* 32, no. 4/5, Creative Communities (2006): 34–36. https://www.jstor.org/stable/45033546.

——— "'Solastalgia': A New Concept in Health and Identity," *PAN: Philosophy Activism Nature* no. 3 (2005): 41–55.

Alpers, Paul. *What Is Pastoral?*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.

Armstrong, Martin. "The Poetry of George Meredith." *The North American Review* 213, no. 748 (March 1821): 354–361. www.jstor.com/stable/25120703.

Atlas, Allen. "Where the Lark Does Not Ascend." *Journal of the RVW Society* 45 (June 2009): 8–10.

Baumgartner, Michael, and Ewelina Boczkowska. *Music, Collective Memory, Nostalgia and Trauma in European Cinema After the Second World War*. New York: Routledge, 2020. https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.dist.lib.usu.edu/lib/usu/detail.action?docID=5900109.

Benedetti, Nicola. "Ten Facts Ten Pieces: Vaughan Williams – The Lark Ascending." *In Tune Highlights*. Podcast. October 14, 2015. https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p034sjh2.

Berliner, David. *Losing Culture: Nostalgia, Heritage, and Our Accelerated Times*, translated by Dominic Horsfall. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2020.

Berry, David. *On Nostalgia*. Toronto: Couch House Books, 2020.

Bladow, Kyle, and Jennifer Ladino, eds. *Affective Ecocriticism: Emotion, Embodiment, Environment*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2018. https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.dist.lib.usu.edu/lib/usu/detail.action?docID=5520528.

Bonnett, Alastair. *Left in the Past: Radicalism and the Politics of Nostalgia*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic & Professional, 2010. https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.dist.lib.usu.edu/lib/usu/detail.action?docID=592427.

Botstein, Leon. "Memory and Nostalgia as Music-Historical Categories." *The Musical Quarterly* 84, no. 4 (Winter, 2000): 531–536. www.jstor.org/stable/742594.

Boym, Svetlana. *The Future of Nostalgia*. New York: Basic Books, 2001.

Buell, Lawrence. *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1995.

Butler, Judith. "Afterword: After Loss, What Then?" In *Loss: The Politics of Mourning*, edited by David Eng, David Kazanjian, 467–473. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002. https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.dist.lib.usu.edu/lib/usu/detail.action?docID=223354.

Carson, Rachel. *Silent Spring*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962.

Clewell, Tammy, ed. *Modernism and Nostalgia: Bodies, Locations, Aesthetics*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013. https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.dist.lib.usu.edu/lib/usu/detail.action?docID=1366384.

Cobbett, W. W., and Noël Goodwin. "Hall, Marie." *Grove Music Online*. 2001. Edited by Deane Root. https://doi-org.dist.lib.usu.edu/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.12232.

Committee on Climate Change. *UK Climate Change Risk Assessment 2017*. London: 2017. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-climate-change-risk-assessment-2017.

Cunsolo Willox, Ashlee. "Climate Change as the Work of Mourning." *Ethics & the Environment* 17, no. 2, Special Issue on Climate Change (Fall 2012): 137–164.

Cunsolo Willox, Ashlee, and Karen Landman, eds. *Mourning Nature: Hope at the Heart of Ecological Loss and Grief*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2017.

Davis, Fred. *Yearning for Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia*. New York: Free Press, 1979.

De Bont, Raf, and Rajesh Heynickx. "Landscapes of Nostalgia: Life Scientists and Literary Intellectuals Protecting Belgium's 'Wilderness,'" 1900–1940." *Environment and History* 18, no. 2 (May 2012): 237–260. www.jstor.org/stable/23250918.

France, John. "The Reception of Hugh Bean's Recording of 'The Lark Ascending.'" *Ralph Vaughan Williams Society Journal* 60 (June 2014): 15–17.

Garrard, Greg. *Ecocriticism (The New Critical Idiom)*. New York: Routledge, 2004.

Gaston, Sean. *The Impossible Mourning of Jacques Derrida*. Continuum: London, 2006.

Gifford, Terry. *Pastoral*. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge, 2020.

Haig-Whiteley, Jean M. "Hall, Marie Pauline (1884–1956), violinist." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography.* 23 Sept. 2004. https://doi.org.dist.lib.usu.edu/10.1093/ref:odnb/38575.

Holmes, John. “Darwinism, Feminism, and the Sonnet Sequence: Meredith’s ‘Modern Love.’” *Victorian Poetry* 48, no. 4 (Winter 2010): 523–538.

Howes, Frank. *The Music of Ralph Vaughan Williams*. London: Oxford University Press, 1954.

Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES). *Summary for policymakers of the global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services*. Bonn, Germany: IPBES, 2019. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3553579.

Jacobsen, Michael Hviid, ed. *Nostalgia Now: Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives on the Past in the Present*. London: Routledge, 2020. https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.dist.lib.usu.edu/lib/usu/detail.action?docID=6121570.

Kennedy, Michael. *Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams*. London: Oxford University Press, 1971.

Keightley, Emily, and Michael Pickering. *The Mnemonic Imagination: Remembering as Creative Practice*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012. https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.dist.lib.usu.edu/lib/usu/detail.action?docID=1039399.

King, Richard. *The Lark Ascending: The Music of the British Landscape*. London: Faber & Faber, 2019.

Lasch, Christopher. “The Politics of Nostalgia: Losing history in the mists of ideology.” *Harper’s* 269 (1984): 65–70.

Leopold, Aldo. *A Sand County Almanac: With Essays on Conservation from Round River*. 7th ed. New York: Ballantine Books, 1986.

Loughrey, Bryan, ed. *The Pastoral Mode*. London: Macmillan Publishers Ltd, 1984.

Lowenthal, David. “Nostalgia Tells it Like it Wasn’t.” In *The Imagined Past: History and Nostalgia*, edited by Christopher Shaw and Malcolm Chase, 18–32. New York: Manchester University Press, 1989.

Macy, Joanna. “Working Through Environmental Despair.” In *Ecopsychology: Restoring the Earth, Healing the Mind*, edited by Theodore Roszak, Mary E. Gomes, and Allen D. Kanner, 240–259. San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1995.

Manning, David. “Harmony, Tonality and Structure in Vaughan Williams's Music.” PhD diss., University of Wales, 2003.

Marinelli, Peter V. *Pastoral*. London: Methuen & Co Ltd, 1971.

Mark, Andrew. “Don’t Organize, Mourn: Environmental Loss and Musicking.” *Ethics and the Environment* 21, no. 2 (Fall 2016): 51–77. doi:10.2979/ethicsenviro.21.2.03.

McVeigh, Simon. "'As the sand on the sea shore': Women Violinists in London's Concert Life around 1900." In *Essays on the History of English Music in Honour of John Caldwell: Sources, Style, Performance, Historiography*, edited by Emma Hornby and David Maw, 232–258. Woolbridge, Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer: 2010.

Mellers, Wilfred. *Vaughan Williams and the Vision of Albion*. London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1989.

Meredith, George. "The Lark Ascending," *The Fortnightly Review* 35 (1881): 588–591. https://hdl.handle.net/2027/coo.31924077571200.

Radke, Melanie. "Folk influences in concert repertoire for the violin: A Performer's Perspective." Master's thesis, Elder Conservatorium of Music, 2007.

Rehding, Alexander. "Ecomusicology between Apocalypse and Nostalgia." *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 64, no. 2 (Summer 2011): 409–414. doi:10.1525/jams.2011.64.2.409.

Read, Peter. *Returning to Nothing: The Meaning of Lost Places*. Cambridge; New York; Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Revill, George. "The Lark Ascending: Monument to a Radical Pastoral." *Landscape Research* 16, no. 2 (1991): 25–30.

Riley, Matthew. *Edward Elgar and the Nostalgic Imagination*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Rosaldo, Renato. "Imperialist Nostalgia." *Representations* 26, Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory (Spring 1989): 107–122. doi: 10.2307/2928525.

Routledge, Clay. *Nostalgia: A Psychological Resource*. New York: Routledge, 2016. https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.dist.lib.usu.edu/lib/usu/detail.action?docID=4014625.

Sayers, Nicola. *The Promise of Nostalgia: Reminiscence, Longing and Hope in Contemporary American Culture*. New York: Routledge, 2020. https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.dist.lib.usu.edu/lib/usu/detail.action?docID=6007442.

Saylor, Eric. *English Pastoral Music: From Arcadia to Utopia, 1900–1955*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2017. https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.dist.lib.usu.edu/lib/usu/detail.action?docID=4866466.

Schneider-Mayerson, Matthew, and Brent Ryan Bellamy. *An Ecotopian Lexicon*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019. https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.dist.lib.usu.edu/lib/usu/detail.action?docID=6002232.

Schröder, Andressa, Nico Völker, Robert A. Winkler, Tom Clucas, eds. *Futures Worth Preserving: Cultural Constructions of Nostalgia and Sustainability*. Bielefeld, Germany: Transcript Verlag, 2019. https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.dist.lib.usu.edu/lib/usu/detail.action?docID=5652045.

Smith, Mick. "Environmental Anamnesis: Walter Benjamin and the Ethics of Extinction." *Environmental Ethics* 23, no. 4 (2001): 359–376.

Starobinski, Jean. "The Idea of Nostalgia." *Diogenes* 54 (1966): 81–103.

Stein, Alexander. "Music, Mourning and Consolation." *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 52, no. 3 (2004): 783–811. doi: 10.1177/00030651040520031801.

Tannock, Stuart. "Nostalgia Critique." *Cultural Studies* 9, no. 3 (1995): 153–164.

Thomas, Hugh. "To Marie Hall." *Ralph Vaughan Williams Society Journal* 54 (June 2012): 14–15.

Thomson, Aiden J. "Becoming a national composer: critical reception to c.1925." In *The Cambridge Companion to Vaughan Williams*, 56–78, edited by Alain Frogley and Aiden J. Thomson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

Trevelyan, George Macaulay, *The Poetry and Philosophy of George Meredith*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906.

Turner, Brian S. "A Note on Nostalgia." *Theory, Culture, and Society* 4, no. 1 (1987):147–156.

Vârlan, Petra-Cristina. "Typical and atypical aspects in The Lark Ascending by Ralph Vaughan Williams." *Bulletin of the Transilvania University of Braşov Series VIII: Performing Arts* 8 (57), no. 2 (2015): 123–138.

Vaughan Williams, Ralph. *The Lark Ascending*, introduction by Michael Kennedy. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Vaughan Williams, Ralph. *The Lark Ascending*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1925. www.bl.uk/collection-items/vaughan-williams-the-lark-ascending.

Vaughan Williams, Ralph. The Letters of Ralph Vaughan Williams. http://vaughanwilliams.uk/letter/vwl426.

Vaughan Williams, Ursula. *R. V. W.: A Biography of Ralph Vaughan Williams*. New York: Clarendon Press, 2002.

Wallace-Wells, David. *The Uninhabitable Earth: Life After Warming*. New York: Tim Duggan Books, 2019.

Watkins, Holly. “Musical Ecologies of Place and Placelessness.” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 64, no. 2 (Summer 2011): 404–408. doi:10.1525/jams.2011.64.2.404.

Wright, Katherine. “Pining for the Present: Ecological Remembrance and Healing in the Armidale State Forest.” *Environmental Philosophy* 9, no. 1, Special Issue: Temporal Environments: Rethinking Time and Ecology (Spring 2012): 109–126. www.jstor.org/stable/26169398.

Reflective Writing

When I first began working on my capstone proposal in 2019, I had no idea just how many messes I would end up creating for myself, especially as I initially thought I would end up just doing something that would work for the grad applications I was still on the fence about. The focus of my project has both broadened and narrowed since those initial proposal drafts, and it has become something personally meaningful beyond fulfilling requirements for applications and Honors itself. I consider this final product and its associated lecture recital the capstone my undergraduate education for several reasons—it incorporates aspects of my current interests and pursuits in music and science, it goes beyond the pre-existing senior recital, and it forced me to redefine what I am comfortable with in terms of research, writing, and performance. Because of that and the experience of actually writing this paper, what began partially as an excuse for me to relearn one of my favorite violin pieces became something much more significant that also required me to become more familiar with myself and with challenging concepts. This project also forced me to finally learn what it takes for me to truly commit to the performance of a piece of music in order to create something compelling and worthwhile for both me and my intended audience.

This project was more difficult and frustrating than I anticipated in terms of both the paper and the lecture recital. Beyond the struggle of obtaining sources in the middle of a pandemic, there was also the matter of actually understanding what I was reading—it was incredibly frustrating to keep rereading a single sentence of certain sources without actually comprehending what meanings the author did or didn't intend. Alongside that, I also needed to determine if or how my sources related to what I thought I wanted to say while also resisting the urge to dive down every single rabbit hole I came across (especially those that weren't related to

my argument or topic). After my paper was written, I then had to relearn *The Lark Ascending* while simultaneously preparing for my senior recital. The process of returning to a piece of music with several years of technique improvements was less complicated than I expected, but there was still a lot of dissatisfaction about my imperfect bow changes (the result of my still being afraid of the frog) and overabundance of pinky tension, both of which disrupted the long lines and effortless melodies I was intending to create. This made the recital and its related preparations perhaps the most challenging aspect of my capstone—the experience of presenting the lecture itself and the level of artistic commitment and self-awareness for the performance without an expectation for perfection was something both far beyond anything I had previously attempted for a solo recital. Beyond my understanding of my topic, this is perhaps what changed the most throughout this project—when paired with my evolving violin technique and goals, the approach that the lecture recital required transformed how I understand what creates a fulfilling or successful performance for myself, which also required me to commit to my musical intentions while under pressure. This is something I've always struggled with because it's far more comfortable to just focus on striving for technical perfection, even though it's obviously unattainable and inevitably leads to disappointing performances. Because I felt that I needed to provide a concrete aural example of how the ideas behind my reframing of the piece changed my own interpretation and approach to the music itself in a tangible way, my capstone project forced me to really commit to expressing my ideas through and alongside the music.

Working on my capstone exposed me to a lot of interesting ideas that I likely wouldn't have otherwise encountered or thought to consider, and many of them are things I'd like to return to in the future. The field of nostalgia studies in particular contains conflicting arguments across time, which led to thought-provoking concepts at the intersections between fields and provided

examples of numerous interdisciplinary projects involving environmental science, performance and visual art, and philosophy. Though my own project doesn't directly engage with my local or global community, it still connects to ideas and issues that have global implications, and this kind of work could potentially provide a reference for my fellow performance majors if and when they attempt to approach their repertoire form a new perspective—particularly if they're learning *The Lark Ascending*.

My capstone project is by far the most intense research experience I've had to date, and it cemented in my mind that this is the path I want to pursue for the next chunk of time. Now that I've created my own miniature iceberg of sources and ideas, I'm looking forward to expanding this project and/or starting another one entirely and finding more connections across my interests. This project allowed me to glimpse dozens of interesting ideas and subdisciplines that I want to spend time pursuing down their rabbit holes as I continue to explore more of what music can (and does) mean outside of my practice room. This paper and my lecture recital were mostly self-indulgent and allowed me to validate my approach to environmental anxiety, because though I've always known that music is far more fulfilling for me than something like restoration ecology, I've struggled to reconcile that with the idea that all of my actions need to contribute to a larger whole in some substantial and tangible way. The entire process of planning and executing this project showed me that this is not necessarily the case—the arts and humanities are a necessary part of our modern world, and I can still make a difference in my own small sphere of influence without necessarily devoting all of my energy to environmental action. Dr. Scheer and his mentorship throughout my capstone not only introduced me to new and important ideas and people, but also helped me reconcile my hopes, dreams, and fears for the future in a way that also reminded me of the value of taking the time to be human.

Author Bio

Kirsten will graduate from Utah State University with a Bachelor of Music Performance and a minor in Environmental Studies in May of 2021. During her time at USU, Kirsten participated in numerous seminars and summer music festivals and worked with students throughout USU as both a Writing Fellow and an Undergraduate Teaching Fellow. She was also the second violinist of the Caine Undergraduate Research Quartet as part of a chamber opera titled *A Storm We Call Progress*, for which she and her colleague Laurana Wheeler Roderer co-wrote the libretto. The opera premiered virtually in October of 2020. As part of both that opera and this Honors Capstone project, Kirsten presented at numerous research events: USU's Student Research Symposium, the Utah Conference on Undergraduate Research, the National Conference on Undergraduate Research, Research on Capitol Hill, and Posters on the Hill. Kirsten hopes to continue pursuing projects that allow her to combine her interests in music and environmental science. She is looking forward to beginning graduate studies in musicology at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where she has been awarded a Distinguished Graduate Fellowship in the Humanities and Arts.